

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-29 (Canceled).

30. (New) A bearing assembly for facilitating rotation about an axis, said bearing assembly comprising:

an inner race having a raceway that is presented outwardly away from the axis;

an outer race having a raceway that is presented inwardly toward the axis and toward the raceway on the inner race;

rolling elements located between and contacting the inner and outer raceways;

an extension joined to the outer race and projecting axially beyond the raceway of the outer race;

a first wear ring carried by the extension on the outer race axially beyond the raceway of the outer race and having a wear surface located at a steep angle with respect to the axis;

a second wear ring having a wear surface located at a steep angle with respect to the axis and contacting the wear surface of the first wear ring; and

at least one backing element supporting one of the wear rings and urging it toward the other wear ring, so that the wear rings are biased together and establish a dynamic fluid barrier at their wear surfaces;

the wear rings being slightly larger than the envelope formed by the rolling elements around the inner race so that in the absence of the outer race the wear rings may be withdrawn over the rolling elements.

31. (New) A bearing assembly according to claim 30 wherein there are two backing elements – a first backing element that supports the first wear ring and a second backing element that supports the second wear ring – and the backing elements bias the wear rings together.

32. (New) A bearing assembly according to claim 30 wherein a tapered surface is presented generally inwardly toward the axis and surrounds one of the wear rings; wherein said one wear ring has a tapered rear surface that is presented toward the tapered surface that surrounds the wear ring; and wherein said one backing element is an elastomeric O-ring that is located between the tapered rear surface on said one wear ring and the tapered surface that surrounds that wear ring.

33. (New) A bearing assembly according to claim 30 and further comprising a can mounted on the inner race and extending outwardly away from the axis; and wherein said one backing element is located between the can and the second wear ring.

34. (New) A bearing according to claim 31 wherein the backing element for each wear ring includes a base, a floating segment attached to the wear ring, and a connecting segment that extends between the base and the floating segment at an angle oblique to both; and wherein the base of the first backing element is attached to the extension.

35. (New) A bearing assembly according to claim 34 and further comprising a can mounted on the inner race and extending outwardly away from the axis; and wherein the base of the second backing element is attached to the can.

36. (New) A bearing assembly according to claim 33 wherein said one backing element is a membrane located between the second wear ring and the can.

37. (New) A bearing assembly according to claim 36 and further comprising at least one spring located between the can and the second wear ring and biasing the second wear ring toward the first wear ring.

38. (New) An assembly according to claim 30 wherein the extension is formed integral with the outer race.

39. (New) An assembly according to claim 30 wherein the extension is welded to the outer race.

40. (New) An assembly for accommodating rotation about an axis, said assembly comprising:

a first member;

a second member;

a bearing located between the first and second members and having an inner race fitted to the second member and provided with a raceway that is presented away from the axis, an outer race that is fitted to the first member and is provided with a raceway that is presented toward the axis and the raceway of the inner race and also an extension that is located axially beyond its raceway, and rolling elements located between and contacting the raceways of the inner and outer races;

a seal for isolating the interior of the bearing from external contaminants and including a first wear ring carried by the extension of the outer race, a second wear ring supported by the second member and contacting the first wear ring, at least one backing element urging the wear rings together to maintain a dynamic fluid barrier at the contacting wear surfaces, the seal being larger than the envelope formed by the rolling elements around the inner race.

41. (New) An assembly according to claim 40 wherein the second wear ring is carried by the second member.

42. (New) An assembly according to claim 40 and further comprising a can attached to the inner race that is on the second member, and the second wear ring is carried by the can.

43. (New) An assembly according to claim 42 wherein the inner race has a rib that projects outwardly beyond the raceway for the inner race, and the can is mounted on and attached to the rib.

44. (New) An assembly according to claim 40 wherein the extension on the outer race has a tapered surface; wherein the first wear ring has a tapered rear surface that is presented toward the tapered surface on the extension; and wherein the first backing element is an elastomeric O-ring that is between and bears against the tapered surface on the extension and tapered rear surface on the first wear ring.

45. (New) An assembly according to claim 44 wherein the second member has a tapered surface; wherein the second wear ring has a tapered rear surface which is presented toward a tapered surface on the second member; and wherein the seal further comprises another elastomeric O-ring located between the tapered rear surface on the second wear ring and the tapered surface on the second member.

46. (New) An assembly according to claim 44 and further comprising a can attached to the inner race, the can having a tapered surface that is presented generally toward the axis; wherein the second wear ring has a tapered rear surface that is presented toward the tapered surface on the can; and wherein another O-ring is located between and contacts the tapered surface on the can and the tapered rear surface on the second wear ring.

47. (New) An assembly according to claim 40 wherein the backing element is formed from a polymer and includes a base, a floating segment spaced from the base and attached to the wear ring, and a connecting segment extending between and connected to the base and floating segment, the

connecting segment including at least one convolution located at an oblique angle with respect to the axis.

48. (New) An assembly according to claim 40 wherein each wear ring is urged toward the other wear ring by a backing element, with each backing element including a base attached to a supporting structure, a floating segment spaced from the base and attached to the wear ring for the backing element, and a connecting segment located between and connected to the base and floating segment, the connecting segment including at least one convolution located at an oblique angle to the axis.

49. (New) A bearing assembly according to claim 40 and further comprising a flexible membrane attached to the second wear ring to support it ultimately from the second member.